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“I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System.”

Yellow Journalism and Propaganda of Media

The recent hot issue of the Ukraine-Russian war made many wonders about the different perspectives of the war, pro-Russian, pro-Ukraine, and outside parties, as to what is the actual truth. There must be so much misleading information about the war itself for each side to justify their actions. The delivery of this agenda, of the rightfulness of their action, is done through propaganda. One of the most useful ways to deliver propaganda is through social media platforms because it is the most powerful in ways that almost all groups of people included. It is very surprising that even though people promote information, news, and propaganda the most, news report shows that 74% of people don't believe the tech platforms when it comes to getting reliable information because they believe that political manipulation is more influential and believable (Hutchinson 1). It becomes imperative to be able to differentiate the facts from the propaganda and manipulation. This also creates a place for subjective and objective truth between the parties that are directly involved in the conflict. This brings us to the question of the spread of propaganda on social media. Social media becomes a platform where the people across the world give a boost to both yellow journalism and propaganda, resulting in constant sway of public opinions. These clashing opinions are based on both the objective truth and the manipulation of truth, and it results in a decrease in unit cohesion between civilians. Thus, it

becomes imperative for the civilians to educate about the difference between both Yellow Journalism and Propaganda and find access to objective truth, which can be enforced by the Federal Communications Commission to filter out the fake news and try to give out as much truth as possible.

Media tools are situated to bring citizens together, voice their opinions, and build understanding over boundaries, however, it hides the manipulation exerted throughout to create conflicts. When it comes to war or global conflicts, the people on social media are always ready to educate and project their opinions and information to back up their actions. Ryan Guiboa, a prominent journalist believes that social media is a powerful medium for spreading opinions, that might as well be real or fake in “Media Influence of Public Opinion during War: A Good or Bad Capability?”. This increases its importance as media not only reveal “the war realities” but also reveals the inner motives of information that the higher authorities indirectly, “offsetting the propaganda that has been so evident”(Guiboa). Since information As the recent uses of media platforms are exponentially increasing, the spread of the information also increases, whether it is real or fake. It all depends on whether the propaganda or the power of social media is stronger. If the misinformation is most powerful, may it have because of the backup the authorial power gives or the most convincing to believe, it can lead to a lot of conflicts in opinions. In the case of war, the casualties affect the way the country’s civilians feel about the war, whether the casualties are the civilians, the military, or the military on the other side. Since “misinformation they send back home in regards to the status of our soldiers, whether dead, alive, or missing”(Guiboa) is also media mediated, it can be used as propaganda to affect the empathetic feelings the civilians hold towards the war. This might be used as propaganda to create an illusion of the casualties. Consequently, the disinformation that was spread becomes a subjective

truth to the civilians, however, that was just propaganda to justify their actions and increase their morality in the stance. As there is an increase in morality, there is an increase in unit cohesion of the country.

The media doesn't only help fulfill the propaganda of an ongoing war, but also be manipulated to create global conflicts and complicate its conflict resolution. Yellow journalism is the delivery of news solely based on sensationalism and crude exaggeration. Extending to the crude numbers to instigate empathetical feelings, yellow journalism can exaggerate the feelings, and actions to a point where it can result in war-like tension between the parties involved. Yellow journalism can create public support for wanting or awaiting a violent reaction and this journalism can be a way to justify their reactions even though it is standing on a morally correct or incorrect standpoint. Yellow journalism was one of the main causes of the Spanish-American War, and it wasn't just a tiny spark where the tension was heavy. It was the case where it caused tension between the parties to a point of the war. According to the Office of the Historian, many articles were written and popular phrases were thrown into the scope of yellow journalism to promote this war. Phrases such as "Remember the Maine. To hell with Spain" really promoted the public support needed for the attack on Spain, to morally justify the violent reaction. In modern times, these propaganda techniques are conveyed through memes, TikTok, songs, etc. Ivan Pereira, a reliable news reporter from ABC News, argues that many researchers think that there is enough negative influence to promote disinformation, propaganda, and yellow journalism. People must understand the power of propaganda and disinformation since "there is no limit"(Grygiel). This again calls for people's ability to understand the propaganda and disinformation to not be subject to propaganda and yellow journalism. Another form of propaganda that can be seen in the current global conflict is "In previous wars, we'd have people

help with giving supplies or letters. Now you have a video post”(Pereira). A video post that exaggerates the conditions of war, making themselves in a place of victims can also morally break the enemy by attacking the empathy of their civilians. People on social media use it the way it is most beneficial to them, thus the information is manipulated to make other people join the morally justified rally.

However, even though the information projected through yellow journalism and propaganda is false, or it may be the same in many cases, the intentions behind this can vary drastically. The main objective of yellow journalism is to lure readers from the sensationalizing headlines for capitalist reasons. In recent years, yellow journalism has evolved to what it is today known as “fake news”. And as expressed earlier, being on social media, the news gets more readership and attention to the media source. Instead of people getting knowledge through physical media, social media becomes the platform where news agencies can bring forth anecdotes and title articles to grab attention. In the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the news is being sensationalized, on both sides to sway public opinion. The Sun: People’s Papers, a British tabloid newspaper, a known source to spread yellow journalism with extreme and sensationalized headlines, well ahead of time publishes an article on the front cover; “Flight MH17 Shot out of the Sky: Putin’s Missile”(Twitter). As Ukraine played an offensive out of the conflict too, it is expected that people will believe the counterattack by Russia will be sure to intimidate. This made this “news” even scarier as it seemed realistic. However, it was published before it was even confirmed that the flight was the target of Russia’s missile, or if it was the Russian missile in the first place. This is an obvious example of yellow journalism as the news is faked, without any verification and polarized information. This news cover receives a lot of attention, on social media and in the physical media. The objective of this news was clear, that it

was to gain popularism and sensationalism for capitalist reasons. Thus, yellow journalism does the same damage to unit cohesion as propaganda can.

The main objective of propaganda is to sway public opinion and behavior and increase and support the agenda on hand. Though the result of both yellow journalism and propaganda might be similar, or the same, to sway the public's opinion. Even though the objective of yellow journalism is not to give a boost to the agenda, swaying public opinion might help the propaganda of the topic. The main influence of the propaganda is the people in power who wants support for the agenda. In the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the propaganda from Russia is restricted knowledge, and social media bans itself. As Russian parliament wants to imprison anyone who spreads "fake news", which in reality is the objective truth and casualties of the conflict. The fake news is categorizing the conflict as a war so, in that way, it will keep the civilians going against the agenda. When people don't directly go against the agenda, there is indirect support for the agenda. This is purely due to the lack of a democratic system in Russia. Lack of information can infer the same damage as misinformation, and people with higher authority take advantage of this. And Russia's situation can be described in the same way. The justification for this war is conveyed through education. From the "justification" for the war by an authorial figure who commanded this to objective reasons on why this war happened. It is taught in public education (picture attached below) as to Ukraine is a potential threat to Russia, thus far resulting in this conflict. While Russian propaganda is based on a lack of information about the civilians, the Ukrainian agenda takes the form of cartoons, animation, and illustrations. The propaganda is also initiated by the government system, against the enemy government. On Twitter, the Ukrainian government organization posted an illustration of Putin as a trainee of Hitler (picture attached below). This did sway the public visualization of Putin's agenda as

domination over Europe. Moreover, it calls for action against Putin as the government captions “This is not a ‘meme’, but our and your reality right now”(Ukrainian Government Organization). This again proves that even though the damage done in the community might be the same, even if it is misinformation or lack of information, the motive of yellow journalism and propaganda is very different.



(Twitter).

People should be able to differentiate between propaganda and yellow journalism as well as objective truth and manipulative propaganda. When there is a larger circulation of yellow journalism, it increases the popularity of the media source, while the larger circulation of propaganda increases the support of the agenda, there will be an oscillation of perspectives and narratives. There is also the possibility of cases where the misinformation is both yellow journalism and propaganda at the same time, such as in the Spanish American War. The main characteristics of yellow journalism in past years have been the huge print of the news on the front paper, often with a minor section of news assigned to it. There are also usually graphic imaginaries that attract attention and strong emotions. And as the news falls apart, it becomes more obvious that it is polarized by fake interviews and “experts”. But, in recent days, it is seen as clickbait posts on social media to attract attention and increase sensationalism. However, there are a set of rules and laws established to prevent yellow journalism, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Beth Rabinowitz, an author in Political Science, believes that yellow journalism needs to big system to be handled. The FCC requires the broadcasters to “present issues of public importance in an honest, equitable and balanced manner”(Rabinowitz). It was formed in 1949 and soon was abolished in 1987. The sole reason for abolishment was that it prevented the freedom of speech. This created the loophole of yellow journalism that the world is suffering today. The system is required to help the public see the truth without any biased opinions, and kill the system of exaggeration and illusions. Moreover, this policy was never extended to social media platforms, which should be a must, especially in the digital world. Thus the communication broadcasting service might not always portray the truth and may be biased based on the opinions of the people who are in authorial power of these platforms. Furthermore, as long as opinions are not portrayed as truth, explicitly known to people, FCC wouldn't be

involved. If the opinions and perceptions are portrayed as truth, misguide a population or spread information without verification is when FCC would be involved. In this manner the freedom of speech would be reserved and the accessibility of truth will be increased. Recognizing this yellow journalism is crucial, but trying to avoid or put a stop to it is even more important. Reinstating the FCC would decrease the click baits, fake news, and sensationalized headlines on the front of the newspaper, proving that this is a fit solution for yellow journalism.

Propaganda is usually set by political leaders, thus it calls us for a bigger system of power, control, and popularity than them to restrict the agenda on the news. Since propaganda is also a form of freedom of expression and speech as a way to project certain events, however, the extremization of certain facts or hiding some of these facts can be regulated by the FCC. Set to an algorithm on social media platforms, you can be introduced to many extreme agendas to be manipulated and help increase that agenda. Disinformation nation tries to educate people about different forms of disinformation present in media and social media, and how being manipulated by those can be avoided. They believe that once “you click on one crazy video, these same algorithms will bring you increasingly extreme ideas”(Disinformation-news.org), which is a very common way to spread propaganda. However, as mentioned earlier, if Yellow Journalism can control the click baits and sensationalized ideas, this can significantly decrease the spread of propaganda. Aside from clickbait, the spread of a certain agenda can be also through people that stumbled upon this idea. To resolve/decrease this aspect of agenda spread, FCC should have the freedom to mark some of the content on social media if it seems to be a part of extreme propaganda or showing some partial truth. The opinions and posts surely can be expressed and addressed on several platforms, however, a little exclamation mark on the post/information itself can be identified by the readers/audience that it is not the whole truth, just a part of someone’s

narrative. This does complicate the freedom of speech a bit, however, the system should be lenient and only target those who spread exaggeration and sensationalization. As the spread of the agenda decrease, the morality rate and unit cohesion also decrease. A group with less morale will be more likely to give up or surrender. In an extreme case, it might even revolt against the political party at hand. So, FCC's extended duties and involvement in media can help resolve not only yellow journalism but can also flag propaganda to the audience and decrease the spread of misinformation and agenda.

As expressed, there is a common misconception of putting yellow journalism and propaganda in the same category, however it differs in many aspects. Bringing awareness of these both is very important as they are successful in carrying out the illusion of truth affecting the narratives of many civilians. Propaganda can help moralize many violent and disturbing actions, while as yellow journalism can ignite sensationalism about these violent actions. In trying to increase the accessibility of truth in social media, and other digital platforms, big steps like Federal Communications Commission needs to be taken to help see truth as a whole, and not just individual narratives. If truth is not provided to the public, understanding between community as a whole will be severed through different narratives and perspectives, while the big companies and political leaders are successful in their agenda of gaining more money and power. And as different communities grow apart, evolvement of humankind as a whole will be diminished.

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